Urgent Shapes

W W Robinson

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URGENT SHAPES

BY

W.W. ROBINSON

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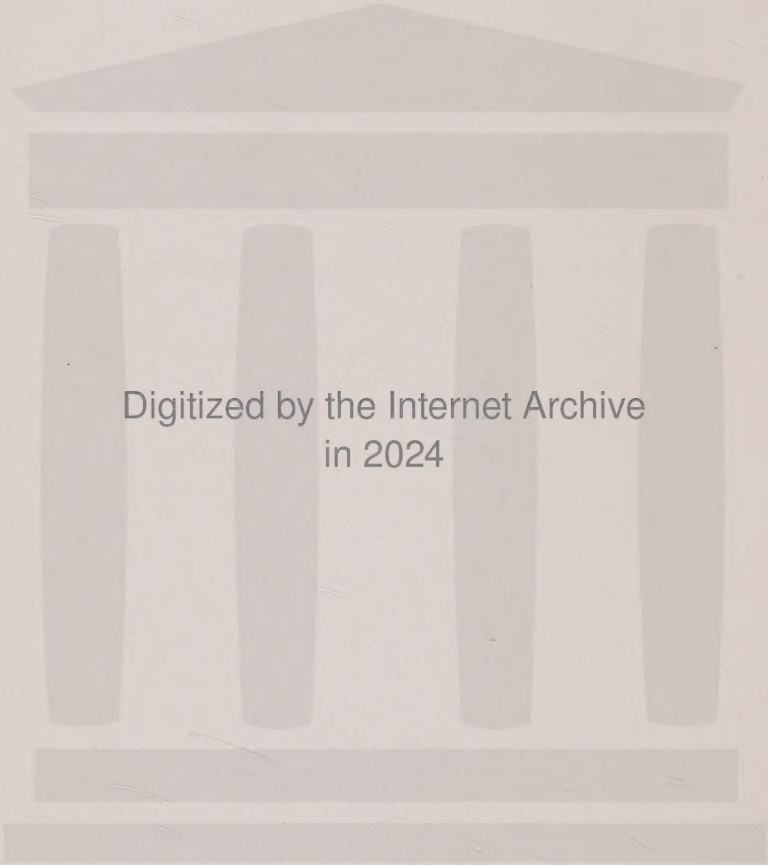
W. W. Robinson

URGENT SHAPES



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A LAGUNA DAWN

This morning I walked along the tawny shore
And saw:

The rising flanks of bronzed breakers
Steaming before the cold wind,
Ever booming in small, metallic thunder.

The gray maneuver of convoluting clouds,
Full-bellied rain-bearers.

The bland, broad gleam of the sea
Blazoned with the green copper of the dawn.

Rain streaking gold upon the horizon,
And a rainbow curve spraying the surface
With its seven subtle rhythms.

ACCENT OF NIGHT

A tree-group wind-bent,
Far straining from the Western Sea.

Lithe, delicate limbs,
Dark foliage ---
A frail and beautiful pattern pressing against
The gray violet of the sky.

Lean branches --- naked arms uplifted ---
Ending unadorned,
Like skeleton fingers.

Eucalypti of new and arresting beauty.
Aristocrats in the fine flow of line,
in the natural harmonies ---
Aristocrats protesting the harsh moods of the sea.

Behind --- a young, wan moon, elusive,
Gliding through cloudy fields,
Lifting now and then the veil of shadowed light,
Touching the scene with wierd and occasional
luminosity.

A silhouette --- finely designed ---
Like a print by Hiroshige.

AN INCLINATION

I lean to the sea
whose somber sequences,
glittering clarities
and treacherous infidelities
are the very quintessence
of all that is
Seductive.

WARNED

On acrid afternoons
Black sands slide down
To meet the tides;
Kelp crawls
Over the shore;
And clouds cluster for the fall
Upon a sea
Gaunt as a werewolf.

SHORE-BOUND

Like the turn
of a walrus tusk
Curves my cove,
fresh swept by tides of night,
Where on big-bellied mornings
I walk the yellow grain
into winds carrying ice
and eternal salt
of blown seas ---
While in the sky the giant kine
swing dark udders to the east,
Rolling, heaving,
Full of purple rain,
And by my side a cold wave
whips the green to white ---
Like the turn of a tusk
lies my tawny cove.

MORNING

To me alone
Discovering its strange, strong beauty,
The sea unrolled its green-cold curves
Upon a bounding sand,
Its surface seething in the sun,
Its steam rising high to the morning,
And, like the mad movements of man,
Sang for me of strength
And sceptic beauty.

BY NIGHT

I go down
to the flinging tides
on a wide wing of beach,
Black as basalt,
Where thin, furious seas
race up the strand —
Salt winds on the rise;
To drown my day
in the thunderous drone
from out a fluid dark;
To efface the facts
in resonant roar.
To timeless tides
I go down.

LOBOS

Where the heave of waters
Shakes the scene,
Where white clamour is eternal
And cliffs of amber
Feel the fists of seas ephebic,
Where motion is maelstrom
And living a frenzy,
Where foam enshrouds
The fingers of flying kelp,
And sculptured sides bear trees
That strain and moan to the skies,
Where salt winds sing
And salt depths surge —
There is the fluid of creation,
The essential All-Male,
The progenitor of forms,
The flowing First-Father.

SEA-BATHER

There is a green-cool cove
where the day lies hot
and jeweled waters flash,
A crescent bay of chrysoprase
where smooth seas heave
and cast green curves
on wet-mauve sand.

I run down to the lapping edge
to the waters' living touch,
To dive at knee-deep through a rising sea
and tingle with a stinging, singing joy
as I cleave the green-cold wave,
My arms in flashing movement
through liquid shades and vibrant clarities,
With body-strength and body-grace
to swim and swirl
in cold-hot delight,
Diving to the yellow, fluttering sand
and toward the circling salt-blue haze,
To turn, up to the surface and the sun
and float, aware of spreading sky
and of sprawling, buoyant cloud ---
And of nothing else at all ....

In the clear-clean substance of green seas
I merge and find
the quality of keen and limpid life.

THE LONG DOOM

I heard the early swing of the sea
Uncoiling on smooth sands,
And recalled the sounds of surging life ---
Mankind's life ---
Whose heavy, hollow boomings,
And soft, caressing breathings ---
Even rarer silences ---
Are drowned in the long iterant doom.

SUN-GOD

Wings
Wide as the West
And feathered of soft fire,
This golden bird
Hangs poised
Over a taut and turquoise sea . . . .

Sky pinions dip to the waves;
Waters become a purple shroud . . . .

Winged flame,
In your passing
I have watched the death of a day.

BEYOND REALITY

Grand Canyon

I feel the cooling rush of wind
Coming up, unceasing.
Its swooning flow
Calls from the ages;
I sense in it the long hint
Of mile depths;
Before this breath from out the earth
The fringe of spruce trees bows,
Filling the air with the quality of
Eternal sweet-smelling.

To look down and away
Is not to look into the real,
But into the beyond-real —
Into a cosmos of the mind,
Of epic panorama,
Phantom color,
Myth-like masses,
Mystery that may not be touched;

I see rhythms of ghostly reds
Binding a thousand buttes,
A thousand peaks,
Sublime miles of valleys,
And the temples of the inner eye;
I see endless shadows in a vast of shadows;
I am tested by the length of ages,
By the purple of the lower granite,
By the banded, tawny limestone.

I am among scenes unbounded,
Where vistas flow through me
Like the cooling rush of wind
That comes swooning up
Out of eternity.

DESERT NIGHT

Last night I lay down
By a long-dead sea
Whose silence sang in my ears;
I felt the pressure of the stars
And the air soft-breathing on my cheek;
Hour on hour I watched a part-moon
Powdering the horizon with whiteness;
I looked long into the night
Whose quivering impersonality
And disturbing eternity
Filled the heart of my heart
With the music of fear.

SHIPROCK

To take and tame this region
Ute Peak sent a legion,
A long eon ago,
Of men named Navajo.

East and west of Shiprock ---
Men with sky-cool earrings
Are riding pinto prairies
Where lies chin-lee
(The Bad-One wrinkled by
Green ghosts of seas);
Men with black-looped hair
Are building huts of log and mud:
Hogans for weavers of blankets
The color of Navajo blood;
Men with girdles of silver
Are driving fat-faring sheep
Into shadows of mesas,
By shapes of monoliths,
Down the miles of tumult
That run to the bare-blue range ---
East and west of Shiprock.

Ute Peak sent a legion
To take this region;
Stone wings flapped high,
Shiprock rode the sky,
Sailed south an eon ago
With a nation named Navajo.

THREE PUEBLOS

ACOMA

What man shall frame the epopee
Of this red-ribbed, pagan height,
This ancient barbarity
Where brown men's might
Lifts a city to the sky!
Chromatic, carven cliff of Acoma —
Amid a wild of mesas a peopled mesas . . . .
In time's romantic mirror
Acoma is an exultant error.

LAGUNA

Warm earth rising
In terraces of buff and grey;
Sun-splashed soil springing,
A memory of soft array
And of the caress of continuous line.
Old sun-drenched village in mood of Spain . . . .
Laguna is the meat of a casaba melon,
Its heart is white, pink and citron.

TAOS

Purple and pyramidic,
Lifting its drama to the evening sky;
Supple in line and rhythmic,
Vibrating a unity in the eye.
High-terraced Taos chants the ripe song
Of the fulness of living . . . .
Ancient Taos is a bright-blanketed boy
Chanting, dancing, leaping in joy.

THE SUN-DOWN DANCE

From the west
I see men come shuffling —
Slow swaying —
Pulsing in rhythms of ancient song,
Dancers, red dancers,
Pueblo chanters . . . .
And Taos,
The high-terraced, the mouse-colored,
Taos looks down.

He ya, ha ya, ah!
Scarlet, purple, white and green,
In enfilading line
The blankets of mocassined men
Pass heaving before Taoan women —
Bright-eyed, dramatic women
On earthen roofs consumed in glow.

I see hills of shadows
Lift darkness to the mountain,
I hear chanted phrases flow high,
I see in each man's hand
An autumn brand
That quivers above his head —
A rare-gold forest brand
With aspen hearts all leaping.

A sweep of candid color
And a unity vibrating in the eye;
A wierd lift
Of utter song,
And the chant of simple men
That stings the mind
And stirs a kindred surge.

He ya, ha ya, ah!
Green to gold the seasons dance.
Thanks to the Sun,
Thanks to Verdant Spring,
To Full-hued Summer,
To the Red Heart of Fall . . . .
Chanting men tread by;
Till the sun-down fans the sky
Pagan men dance by.

HILLS OF MORRO

They are soft and in mellowed curves,
Like bulging bodies of brown women;
They play in caressing contours,
And a gesture begets solidity.

They are subtle in life and color,
With roan red and umber;
They ascend through corn yellows,
They ripple into green,
And are overlaid with runes of russet —
Soothed with muscular velvet.

They bear ravines and verdant lines to mark them,
With oaks on rounding tops:
Those dark trees that crouch
In charming disarray,
That lift in gnarled fantasy.
Gold-green sycamores gather in the low land
Where the eucalyptus guards the squat farm-house.

Ripe hills of Morro,
Primitive in mass and movement,
They are flowing simply to the sea.

THE RAIN HAS STOPPED

Those hills that lie
in the full, free wind
beneath the furling curtains of the sky.
Those curving shapes
of contoured green
that fill the young and mystic scene
after the long downpour ---
Edged in luminous light,
they are patterned with
feeding herds,
oaks, black and bare,
plowed earth and brown fertility.
I take the yellow-bright road,
empty of men,
that moves and mounts
through the velvet view
into the ringing rhythms
of those hills.

FLUIDITY

I vision high red uplands
Flowing in the fragrant air,
Undulant acres and balsamic pines.

I picture molten masses moving desert-ward,
Tawny life and velvet skin.

I call up hills like yellow-bodied beasts
That run in golden glaze to blue, far heights.

I see the pregnant, fruitful forms
That follow in ripe rows to feed all men.

.... Fluent hills of California.

URGENT SHAPES

Through my window
the sky is black with urgent shapes
and trees are torn to streaming green.

I hurry out
to feel the drift of the day,
To breathe an air that can dance in powdered mist.

Comes lurching in, a lively blow,
as I turn my steps to the gale.
My haze is a rain
with rising roar
slanting on the paved highway.

The murmur of a sea's
in the rush of this rain
that lifts and falls with every fever;
A flurry, a repetitious patter,
a swaggering wind that
shoots arrows of gusty water
from out the sky.

I reach the hills
where livid green
lights up a scene of grey storms
hurling down their gifts of gods:
Undulating rhythms of rains.

I have the touch
of wet-soft drops on lips and cheeks,
and there is cold washed air to breathe.
I shall stay
till the sun bursts through.

THE VALLEY

Find out the valley of colossal shapes,
Of sentinel granite,
Sky-flung streams
And forest-green life —
That Eden of Sierra's range,
Hung in hot sun and mountain shade,
High-hidden, serene
Beneath its basket of blue sky,
Its clouds trailing to Infinity.

Lie in the ripeness of deep meadows,
Where cottonwoods fill warm air
with the white wings of their seed;
Where willows weave a way along cool waters,
And yellow pines lift up their alligator hides,
While blue jays volplane
And fast-flapping pigeons pass.

Look up at the ageless heights,
Leaning in monolithic menace;
Ponder these giants, bone-bare, weather-polished;
Incredible valley of Gargantua,
Green valley of abundant dreams.

THE LAKE

Lake of green crystal sleep,
Where pines and willows and mountains flow
In the bland currents that lap the margin
And merge in lank lush grass.
Divine and lucid drop,
Mirror of grey, glacial granite,
Of climbing cliffs defiant of the eye,
Of heights with measure wholly mental,
Of Half Dome's purple might and menace . . . .
God-like drop of limpid green.

THE WATER FALL

A long leap of rushing water
Carrying white thunder through the air.

Out of the blue cup of the sky pouring,
Over the sleek, black cliff falling,
It bounds, a molten mass,
It breaks into rockets,
Comet-tails smoking,
Into stalactites,
Streaming,
Steaming ---
Frail as fog blown from the mountain,
But with the voice of stupendous uproar.

To climb toward the foot of the falls,
To press against the slanting storm,
To face the stinging, blinding wet,
To approach the up-blowing mouth of maelstrom,
To confront the reverberation,
The Mountain Mystery ---
And to be beaten back ....
That is to acknowledge White Omnipotence.

UNTHINKING

I dwell in a valley
Of green content,
In a kingdom
Of curves
And softened airs —
Where grasses flutter.

I stretch my languid length
Beneath an oak,
To watch the springing line
Of the sky mounting
In pallid blue
Over the mild-mannered hills;
To look up
Into the cool maze
Of my shade;
To study the tree's
Intricate enfoldment,
And revel in the sun-fleck's play,
In the white balance
Of insect wings —
My ears are full of their drone.

I dream of this meadowed place
And its inflow
Of lush, warm life,
Of life lyric,
Without thought —
An eternity of green content.

THE EMBRACE

My delight is in cool clover at first touch,
To roll in grass rich and ripe,
To stretch bare arms to the sun
And lie full-spread
In luminous mid-morning energy.

Above me, blue sky
Swept with a brush of white ---
With renegade broom-wisps
Rare as spider-silk.

Warm, sweet, becomes the Mother-breast of Earth,
The firm, magnetic breast ---
Her body-heat surging, resurging ---
The primitive embrace . . . .
Warm ivory on green mountain.

Eyes tight-shut, I face sun-ward,
A red swirl before me,
A range of red from flame to paisley;
In my ears the plaint of doves
And the dull drone of amber-bellied bees.

With half-held eyes
I look through a clover-jungle of limber green;
Beyond, the circle of swimming hills,
The swelling simplicities,
The mosaic symphonies
Of green and silver . . . .
Nude on the mountain.

DRIFT

On recumbent afternoons
I lie in the warmth of the hollows
Of gentle hills,
Immobile with their million years;
I drowse beneath
A high, hypnotic sky
Whose lines of dreaming drift
Cast shapes of shadows;
I fancy I catch
The call of meadow larks,
The melody of one rare note,
The slender clarity of another;
In my mind's languid eye
I lift myself and look down
Upon the enervated angles
Of a city
Whose far white cubes of buildings
Gleam in a haze
That hovers over the hollows
Of fat hills
On recumbent afternoons.

LOS OLIVOS

I entered the sweet seclusion of night:
Walking far into the uplands
Along a country lane
Full of the shadows of moon
And lined by vistas of wheat
Gilded with alchemic gold;
About me, the rhyming of hills
Upon which --- like flocks of dark birds ---
A thousand oaks had poised themselves;
The air I breathed
Had the ripeness of black earth,
The essence of cut grain
And the dampness of the country-sides of memory;
It was a night made silent
By the singing of insects
And warm by the breathings of day.
I walked long
And was with the air,
The earth,
The radiance,
The phantoms of things ---
All suspended for the moment of the night.

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